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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [AF](#) [UV](#)

SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO's MANDATE ON THE UNSC

Classified by Ambassador Jeanine Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

REF: A) 2008 OUAGADOUGOU 333; B) 2008 OUAGADOUGO 791;
C) 2008 OUAGADOUGO 1027

11. (C) Summary: During the first year of its mandate on the UN Security Council (UNSC), Burkina Faso has produced a voting record that has been a balancing act between support for U.S. initiatives, tempered by respect for the country's traditional friends and allies.

On several occasions, such as a key vote in favor of a U.S. resolution on Zimbabwe, and on the recognition of Kosovo, Burkina has voted with the United States. However, on other issues, such as the Sudan, Iran, and the Russia-Georgia conflict, Burkina has either sided with the African Union, abstained from voting altogether, or decided to wait for international consensus. Burkina Faso almost never takes the lead on an issue, preferring instead to sign its name to declarations made by sub-regional, regional, and international organizations. In the coming year, Burkina Faso will continue to look for guidance from regional and sub-regional organizations, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU). On issues of importance to the U.S., we will need to lobby Burkina Faso hard in order to gain its support. End Summary.

Burkina's Mixed Voting Record

12. (C) During the first year of its mandate on the UN Security Council (UNSC), Burkina Faso has produced a voting record that has been a balancing act between support for U.S. initiatives, tempered by respect for the country's traditional friends and allies. While Burkinabe officials point out that during its first year on the UNSC, Burkina Faso has supported the U.S position on issues such as Zimbabwe and Kosovo, the country has not played a leadership role on other international issues where there is little consensus from the international community. On most issues of a regional nature, Burkina Faso favors waiting for regional organizations to draft public statements and to make policy decisions and plans of action. In response to issues outside of Africa, Burkina Faso can be swayed, but does not typically have a truly national interest. On international issues in particular, Burkinabe policies tend to be more cautious, awaiting leadership from others, such as the AU, or occasionally, the United States, and will wait for international and regional consensus before taking a position. For example, Vincent Zakane, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) chief of staff has told us that he believed regional bodies should be the first international organizations to respond to crises in Africa. For Burkina, this would mean acting in agreement with ECOWAS before bringing an issue to the AU, and then to the UN (or UNSC).

Zimbabwe and Kosovo

13. (C) However, there have been notable exceptions. In July, 2008, Burkina Faso voted with the U.S. and against the African Union (AU) on a Zimbabwe resolution. This was a break from normal Burkinabe policy to adhere to the decisions of regional institutions. Post believes that Burkina Faso voted in this manner because, after participating actively in consultations and meetings on Zimbabwe in New York and discussions with high-level officials in Ouagadougou, the leadership was convinced that the SADC had failed to produce a

solution, and that a resolution from the UNSC would serve to strengthen any actions that would eventually be taken by the AU. This decision was important for Burkina Faso in that it was a break from their normal course of action to follow the lead of the AU.

14. (C) On the issue of Kosovo recognition, Burkina Faso was one of the first African countries to recognize Kosovo as an independent nation. This was also a break from its traditional role of voting with the AU, which had yet to make a decision on Kosovo. While Burkina recognized Kosovo, MFA officials also acknowledged that they were uncomfortable about making such a unilateral decision. Post believed that what finally convinced Burkina Faso to recognize Kosovo was the largely international consensus that Kosovo was already functioning as an independent nation. MFA officials said that recognizing the nation's independence was just a formality. (Reftel A)

The Glass Half Empty

15. (C) When Russia invaded Georgia, the U.S. demarched Burkina Faso asking it to make public statements condemning Russia's actions and calling for a cease-fire. While Burkina Faso agreed that Russia's actions were unacceptable to the international community, MFA representatives also said that Burkina would not make public statements because it would have been one of the only African nations to take a hard-line stance against Russia. For fear of acting unilaterally, Burkina Faso refused to be a forerunner on the issue and instead chose to await further international consensus and to only support resolutions made within the UNSC. (Reftel B)

16. (C) On the issue of Iran, Burkinabe diplomats indicated that Burkina Faso was a strong proponent of nuclear non-proliferation. Burkinabe diplomats had recognized that the Non Aligned Movement (NAM), which includes both Burkina and Iran, was divided on the issue of Iran, but indicated that this division would not alter their commitment to non-proliferation. However, following a request in November, 2008 from the U.S. to vote against a no-action motion at the UN, Burkina Faso chose to abstain rather than vote against the resolution. (Reftel C)

Comment: Looking Ahead

17. (C) In its second year on the Security Council, Burkina Faso will most likely continue to make its decisions based on sub-regional, regional, and international consensus. On issues of major importance to the U.S. where we seek support from Burkina Faso, it will be necessary to lobby hard both in Ouagadougou and in New York. Furthermore, it will be necessary to lean on general international consensus when it supports the U.S. position. Where this is not possible, it will be important to influence other members of ECOWAS and/or of the AU. While Burkina Faso's position can sometimes be moved after careful and extensive lobbying, the U.S. should not expect Burkina to take an independent position or to be the first African country to act.

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